

## CLAIMS

1. An orthodontic bracket comprising:

a bracket base adapted to receive at least one arch wire, the bracket base comprising at least one type of plastic or ceramic; and

a ligation cover hingedly attached to the bracket base such that the cover is movable about a hinge between an open, non-ligating position relative to the bracket base and a closed, ligating position in which the arch wire is ligated relative to the bracket base, the ligation cover comprising at least one type of metal.

2. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, wherein the ligation cover is not significantly biased toward the bracket base, wherein the ligation cover is selectively moveable about the hinge over a substantial angle of rotation between the open, non-ligating position and the closed, ligating position.

3. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by an elastomeric hinge material.

4. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by a film hinge.

5. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by a mechanical hinge.

6. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 5, wherein the mechanical hinge comprises at least one of a pin hinge, a rivet, or a screw.

7. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 5, wherein the mechanical hinge comprises interlocking pieces.

8. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by a fiber hinge.

9. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, further including a latch mechanism for selectively locking the ligation cover to the bracket base in the closed, ligating position.

10. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, further comprising opening means for urging the ligation cover to remain in the open, non-ligating position when in the open, non-ligating position.

11. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 10, the opening means comprising a spring.

12. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 10, the opening means comprising an elastomeric material having memory.

13. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, further comprising closing means for urging the ligation cover to remain in the closed, non-ligating position when in the closed, non-ligating position.

14. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 13, the closing means comprising a spring.

15. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 13, the closing means comprising an elastomeric material having memory.

16. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, wherein the bracket base comprises a rigid plastic material.

17. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, the bracket base comprising a plurality of archwire slots, at least two of which are at least partially occluded by the ligation cover when in the closed, ligating position.

18. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, the bracket base comprising plastic.

19. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 1, the ligation cover covering substantially all of an upper surface of the bracket base when the ligation cover is in the closed, ligating position.

20. An orthodontic bracket comprising:

a bracket base adapted to receive at least one arch wire, the bracket base comprising at least one type of plastic, ceramic or metal;

a ligation cover integrally attached to the bracket base so as to be movable between an open, non-ligating position relative to the bracket base and a closed, ligating position in which the arch wire is ligated relative to the bracket base, the ligation cover comprising at least one type of metal; and

a film hinge comprising a region of reduced cross-sectional thickness integrally interconnecting the bracket base and ligation cover that permits the ligation cover to be selectively rotated about the film hinge over a substantial angle of rotation between the open, non-ligating position and the close, ligating position.

21. An orthodontic bracket comprising:

a bracket base adapted to receive at least one arch wire, the bracket base comprising at least one type of plastic, ceramic or metal;

a ligation cover integrally attached to the bracket base so as to be movable between an open, non-ligating position relative to the bracket base and a closed, ligating position in which the arch wire is ligated relative to the bracket base, the ligation cover comprising at least one type of metal; and

a film hinge comprising a region of reduced cross-sectional thickness integrally interconnecting the bracket base and ligation cover that does not significantly bias the ligation cover toward the closed, ligating position when in the open, non-ligating position.

22. An orthodontic bracket comprising:

a bracket base having an arch wire slot adapted to receive at least one arch wire, the bracket base comprising at least one type of plastic, ceramic or metal; and

a ligation cover hingedly attached to the bracket base such that the cover is movable about a hinge between an open, non-ligating position, in which no portion of the ligation cover remains directly above the arch wire slot, and a closed, ligating position, in which the ligation cover at least partially covers the arch wire slot,

the ligation cover comprising at least one type of metal, and

the ligation cover covering substantially all of an upper surface of the bracket base when the ligation cover is in the closed, ligating position.

23. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 22, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by an elastomeric hinge material.

24. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 22, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by a film hinge comprising a region of reduced cross-sectional thickness.

25. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 22, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by a mechanical hinge.

26. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 25, wherein the mechanical hinge comprises at least one of a pin, a rivet, or a screw.

27. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 25, wherein the mechanical hinge comprises interlocking pieces.

28. An orthodontic bracket as defined in claim 22, wherein the ligation cover is attached to the bracket base by a fiber hinge.

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